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Transportation Planning for the Withdrawal
of DOD Personnel and Assets from Iraq

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

JOPES	Joint Operation Planning and Execution System
U.S.C.	United States Code
USCENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
USTRANSCOM	U.S. Transportation Command



INSPECTOR GENERAL
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December 11, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Transportation for DOD Personnel and Cargo Relocation From the Iraq Drawdown
(Report No. D2010-025)

We are providing this report for your information and use. The report summarizes our observations for the audit of Transportation for DOD Personnel and Cargo Relocation From the Iraq Drawdown (Project No. D2009-D000LC-0240.001). No written response to this report is required.

This was the first in a series of DOD Office of Inspector General audits that will address the transportation of troops, support personnel, and equipment during the relocation efforts. The objective of this audit was to evaluate the planning process used by the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) in determining how to meet combat troop withdrawal goals by August 31, 2010. We evaluated the determination of transportation needs, the identification of transportation methods, and the timeline for relocating troops and their support equipment. We coordinated our audit efforts with the GAO team that developed the testimony and report, "Operation Iraqi Freedom, Preliminary Observations on DOD Planning for the Drawdown of U.S. Forces from Iraq" (GAO-10-179). We have concluded based on our evaluations and observations that USTRANSCOM and U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) have produced a plan that is a reasonable representation of the transportation needs that have been defined at this point.

Background

In the "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq," dated November 17, 2008, the parties decided that all U.S. forces would be withdrawn from all Iraqi territories no later than December 31, 2011. In February 2009, President Obama accelerated the agreement by announcing that all U.S. combat troops would be withdrawn from Iraq by August 31, 2010.

The Secretary of Defense is responsible for transportation planning and operations within DOD; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff evaluates movement requirements and resources, and allocates capability when required. USTRANSCOM provides global transportation management through an integrated transportation and distribution system and through its component commands. The Services retain responsibility for organizing, training, equipping, and providing logistics support (including Service-unique transportation) for their respective forces. The transportation planning process is complex. In the case of the Iraq drawdown, the process requires the interaction of numerous U.S. and multinational commands and components to ensure its effective and efficient accomplishment.

USTRANSCOM was established in 1987 as the DOD wartime transportation manager. In 1993, DOD Directive 5158.4, “United States Transportation Command,” January 8, 1993, established USTRANSCOM as the DOD single manager for all defense transportation. USTRANSCOM has combatant command authority over the three transportation component commands—Air Mobility Command, Military Sealift Command, and Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command. It also has responsibility for other organizations supporting DOD transportation activities and for all transportation assets of the Military Departments except Service-unique or theater-assigned assets. In September 2003, the Secretary of Defense further designated USTRANSCOM as the DOD Distribution Process Owner¹ for transportation. USTRANSCOM provides its customers the transportation planning expertise required during the transportation planning process. USTRANSCOM can provide information to assist in the development of alternative courses of action and optimal flow of forces during the transportation planning process.

The Defense Transportation System is the worldwide transportation infrastructure that supports DOD. The USTRANSCOM Deployment Distribution Operations Center serves as the focal point to orchestrate and optimize the Defense Transportation System operations in support of the unified commanders and other customers. The center provides command and control of global mobility forces and other assets and is the single DOD transportation focal point for customers. Each geographic combatant command also maintains joint distribution operations centers that synchronize with USTRANSCOM for distribution, force deployment, and sustainment within each command’s area of responsibility.

The transportation planning process is governed by numerous statutory and regulatory requirements. Public laws such as the Cargo Preference Act of 1954 (section 1241b, title 46, United States Code [46 U.S.C. 1241b]); the Fly America Act (49 U.S.C. 40118); and others must be taken into consideration when planning and executing transportation for DOD people and assets. In addition, the Defense Transportation Regulation; DOD Directives, Instructions, and Joint Publications such as Joint Publication 5-0, “Joint Operation Planning”; and Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) manuals must be part of the planning process. Consolidated guidance incorporating many of these requirements is included in USTRANSCOM Handbook 24-2, “Understanding the Defense Transportation System,” January 30, 2009, and in the USTRANSCOM and United States Joint Forces Command’s publication USTRANSCOM Handbook 10-20, “Joint Planners Handbook for Deployment Operations,” November 2005.

Transportation Planning Process Results

USCENTCOM has developed a plan for withdrawing all combat troops from Iraq by the President’s goal of August 31, 2010. USTRANSCOM is responsible for providing transportation to fulfill this plan. We evaluated the determination of transportation needs, the identification of transportation methods, the current status of this plan, and whether the plan will meet the President’s goal.

¹ USTRANSCOM’s Distribution Process Owner’s role is to oversee the overall effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment of DOD-wide distribution activities including force projection, sustainment, and redeployment or retrograde operations.

Determination of Transportation Needs

Supported commanders are responsible for identifying the forces and equipment that need to be moved, the departure and arrival dates, and other details to initiate transportation planning that will meet their needs. They then communicate these needs to USTRANSCOM. For the drawdown in Iraq, USTRANSCOM depends on the detailed input from USCENTCOM and its components to identify which DOD personnel and assets need to be moved, when the moves need to occur, and the points of embarkation and debarkation. Without up-to-date, reliable input, USTRANSCOM will not be able to adequately plan for the effective and efficient redeployment of troops and DOD assets.

USCENTCOM developed its overall plan for the withdrawal of troops in accordance with the timeline in the agreement between the United States and the Republic of Iraq and the President's directive. USCENTCOM updates and refines the plan as additional transportation needs are identified. USCENTCOM gathers information through joint conferences with its components and with other commands responsible for theater operations. USCENTCOM and its components then enter force and equipment movement details into electronic transportation systems such as JOPES as requirements are identified and quantified. Additional changes to the plan may come in the form of directives by the President, Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The plan can also be updated or revised if there are changes in the assumptions on which the plan is based.

Identification of Transportation Methods

USCENTCOM and its components are responsible for identifying the people and assets to be transported to or from Iraq. USCENTCOM determines which form of transportation to request from USTRANSCOM based on USCENTCOM's business rules. For example, if a component commander requests air transport for certain items of equipment, the commander should justify that request because shipment by air is much more expensive than by sea.

According to USCENTCOM officials, the preferred method for shipping for DOD troops and personnel is air, whereas the preferred method for equipment and other DOD assets is sea. DOD assets are to be shipped by air only if they meet the criteria established in the USCENTCOM business rules. A USCENTCOM official responsible for deciding whether to ship by air or sea said that another primary issue may be time. If a component commander does not or cannot (due to late notification) make a transportation request early enough to ensure mission-essential equipment can be sent by sea, the equipment may have to go by air. He said USCENTCOM always encourages components to make requests in time to use sea whenever possible because of the difference in cost and limited air asset availability. To use sealift requires validation by USCENTCOM 50 days prior to the earliest arrival date; airlift requires validation 21 days prior to the earliest arrival date. If USCENTCOM receives a request for validation for items that are needed in fewer than 50 days, the requirement may have to go by air. USCENTCOM validates component command requirements in JOPES, including the desired mode of transportation.

USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM then determine which transportation methods will be used—air, sea, or a combination of the two. USTRANSCOM pulls the JOPES data to determine whether it has the capability to meet the transportation request as submitted. If USTRANSCOM is not able to meet the request as submitted, the command notifies the requester and presents alternatives. The requester may be asked to shift dates for the request or prioritize its other requests.

Status of Transportation Planning

The USCENTCOM drawdown plan was updated during a recent Force Flow conference held at USTRANSCOM. Because this is the plan on which USTRANSCOM is basing its transportation planning activities, we attended the conference and reviewed the updated plan.

The Force Flow conference brought together the commands and components involved in planning the transportation of troops and assets from Iraq during the drawdown. During the conference, plans were updated daily to reflect pertinent additional information that was entered into JOPES as requirements were being defined and refined by the component commands. USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM attempted to build some flexibility into the plan to allow for some of the probable scenarios they would have to manage, such as weather, but they were unable to foresee all contingencies.² In addition, all of the detailed data needed to do a complete analysis of the Iraq drawdown had not been entered into the transportation system at that time. Although the number of combat troops to be withdrawn from Iraq is defined, the DOD assets supporting these troops have not been fully defined. Efforts to identify all of the equipment and other assets that will be removed from Iraq are still underway. We were told by USCENTCOM officials that the remaining information for combat troop withdrawals should be in the system by January 2010.

USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM officials stated in the final briefing for the conference that they will continually revisit the plan as circumstances and situations unfold. Officials plan additional meetings in theater and additional Force Flow conferences as the drawdown progresses.

Timeline for Relocation of Troops and Support Equipment

At the time of our audit, USTRANSCOM and USCENTCOM officials concluded that, barring unforeseen events, they would make the deadline for combat troop withdrawal by the President's timeline of August 31, 2010. The drawdown has already begun.

Summary of Observations

We observed that USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM were following DOD guidelines and procedures applicable to the transportation planning process. They also conducted tests of the data entered into JOPES during the Force Flow conference to ensure they were accurate and fell within the range of USTRANSCOM capabilities to support the proposed movement of troops and assets.

During the Force Flow conference, USCENTCOM and USTRANSCOM collaborated with their components to prepare a plan that contained the transportation requirements identified at the time of the conference. They addressed redeployment of combat troops from Iraq by August 31, 2010, and deployment of other troops to Iraq. The combat troops to be moved are defined; however, the timing of the movements could be altered depending on contingencies.

The DOD assets that are to be moved and the methods for transporting these assets are still being identified. In addition, the potential impact of moving DOD contractors and contractor assets remains to be defined.

² Some of these contingencies were addressed in the recent GAO testimony and report (GAO-10-179).

We have concluded based on our evaluations and observations that USTRANSCOM and USCENCOM have produced a plan that is a reasonable representation of the transportation needs that have been defined at this point. The transportation plan is still fluid. Whether it is fully executable cannot be determined. Therefore, we are making no recommendation in this report.

This memorandum closes the subject audit, the scope and methodology for which are attached. We appreciate the courtesies extended to the staff by the U.S. Transportation Command, the U.S. Central Command, and their component commands during the audit.

If you have any questions on the report, please contact me or [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Alice F. Carey
Acting Assistant Inspector General
Readiness, Operations, and Support

Attachment:
As stated

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Attachment: Scope and Methodology

We conducted this audit from June through December 2009 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the assessment to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our observations based on our objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our observations based on our audit objectives.

We evaluated the joint planning process used by combatant commanders for planning for the drawdown of people and assets that will need to be moved; the methods to be used in making these moves—air, sea, and land; and potential transportation issues that could affect the timely and effective withdrawal of people and assets from Iraq. We conducted audit work at USTRANSCOM, the functional combatant command responsible for transporting DOD personnel and assets, and at USCENTCOM, the geographic combatant command responsible for the Iraq drawdown.

We identified relevant component commands, criteria, and planning documents. In addition, we reviewed available information on such factors as port capacities, available transportation methods (air, sea, and land), and contingencies that could impact USTRANSCOM's ability to accomplish the task within the specified time frames. Further, we reviewed statutes, Federal regulations, and organizational guidance to ensure the planning process complied with the guidance. We did not use computer-processed data, nor did we do an assessment of the reliability of computer-processed data used in the planning process. We examined audit reports for prior coverage and interviewed officials involved in the joint planning of the drawdown. We examined GAO Report No. GAO-08-930, "Operation Iraqi Freedom, Actions Needed to Enhance DOD Planning for Reposturing of U.S. Forces from Iraq," September 10, 2008, and GAO Report No. GAO-10-179, "Operation Iraqi Freedom, Preliminary Observations on DOD Planning for the Drawdown of U.S. Forces from Iraq," November 2, 2009, for prior coverage.



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